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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Thursday, September 26, 1940.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "COOKING QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics and the Bureau of Plant Industry, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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All summer we have avoided oven cooking as much as we could. But now, with cool mornings and evenings, it's rather comfortable to start the day- or end it,- with appetizing hot foods, cooked in an oven that helps warm up the house a little.

So baking questions have the floor today- hot biscuits for breakfast, how to use soybean meal in cooking, and whether you can bake Kieffer pears, as well as eat them without cooking. On the baking points the answers are from the Bureau of Home Economics, and the Bureau of Plant Industry adds some information about storing Kieffer pears.

Perhaps there was more fact than fancy in the superiority of "biscuits like mother used to make", for here's a complaint on that very subject. "Can you tell me how to make biscuits, as they were made in Southern homes years ago? It seems to me that there is something wrong somewhere,- either with the flour or something else, as I do not seem to be able to produce good biscuits like mother did with plain flour, baking soda, and buttermilk."

Without tasting one of this lady's biscuits, the food people in the Bureau of Home Economics cannot very well diagnose her trouble. But they can tell her how to make some biscuits that will be good, with "plain flour, baking soda, and buttermilk", and here are their directions:

Use an all-purpose, or blended, flour, for best results. Use only enough soda to neutralize the acid in the buttermilk- half a level teaspoon for each cup of buttermilk if it is good and sour. It is better to use too little soda than too much. An overdose of soda gives a disagreeable odor and flavor and a yellowish

tinge to the biscuits. Instead of using more soda, use some baking powder. And instead of stirring the soda into the buttermilk, sift it with the dry materials. Older cooks did not do this, but modern laboratory tests have shown that the leavening gas formed by the soda acts too quickly when mixed with the liquid.. And, finally, to make a biscuit with a large volume and a tender flaky crumb free from yellow or brown specks, stir the ingredients from the center of the bowl until a soft dough is formed, and then turn the dough out onto a flour board and knead gently for about 18 strokes. Roll out into a sheet about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch thick, and cut as many biscuits as you can before rolling again.

So much for the general method. Now for an exact recipe. To make 25 medium-sized buttermilk biscuits, you need 3 cups of all-purpose flour, measured after sifting, 2 level teaspoons of baking powder, $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of soda, 1 teaspoon of salt, 4 to 6 tablespoons of fat, and buttermilk to make a soft dough,- about 1 cup.

Sift the dry ingredients together and cut in the fat with a biscuit cutter. Make a well in the mixture, and add the buttermilk slowly, stirring from the center. Knead the dough gently, roll out, cut, and bake in a hot oven- 450 degrees Fahrenheit- for about 15 minutes.

Another baking question in the next letter. "How can I use soybean meal in cooking?"

You can use one-fourth soybean flour or meal and three-fourths wheat flour in standard recipes for yeast bread, muffins, biscuits and other quick breads, or in pastry or plain cakes. If you use a larger proportion of soybean flour, you may have to adjust the other ingredients. Typical recipes are given in Leaflet 166-L, Soybeans for the Table, a publication you can get from the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

Coming to the question about Kieffer pears: "Can Kieffer pears be baked as well as stewed, and are they ever eaten fresh?"

The plant scientists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture say that you can bake Kieffer pears, and you can also eat them in the hand, if you have picked your pears at the right stage of maturity, and ripen them properly. The peculiarity about storing Kieffer pears is the temperature they must have to be at their best.

If you hold them above 65 degrees Fahrenheit, they will stay firm and tough. And if you store them below 55 degrees, they ripen too slowly and never have a satisfactory texture. But if you can hit a temperature between 55 and 65 degrees and store your pears at that temperature for 2 or 3 weeks, the pears will ripen and be good for eating as they are, or for baking, stewing, canning, preserving, or pickling. The best flavor develops when you hold the pears between 60 and 65 degrees.

This is about the natural outdoor temperature at this time of year in the regions where Kieffers grow, so it is not difficult to find a storage place for them. Watch the ventilation, and keep the temperature even.

You can also store Kieffers at 32 degrees for 2 or 3 months, and they will stay just as they were when picked. Then put them in a room at 60 degrees, and they will ripen more readily than they do just after harvesting- in half to three-fourths of the time. Don't store the pears at 32 degrees longer than 90 days, however.

That's the last question for today. More next week.

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